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EDITORIAL

PFC level drop sign of Decatur's good stewardship

Decatur on Friday became a better steward of one of its most valuable resources, the Tennessee River.

For more than a decade, Decatur had been dumping toxic perfluorocarbons into the Tennessee River. The chemicals, likely carcinogens, also are harmful to aquatic life and birds. The PFCs originated in local industries.

They entered the river directly through the Decatur Utilities wastewater treatment plant and indirectly through the Morgan County Regional Landfill, which disposed of its contaminated leachate at the DU plant.

Because the wastewater treatment plant has no ability to remove the chemical, PFCs entering the plant entered the river.

This is a sad story that no doubt caused significant damage to the Tennessee River.

Happily, the story does not end here.

About two years ago, the magnitude of the problem became apparent to local officials through the intervention of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Since then, DU has prohibited industries from contributing PFCs to the wastewater treatment plant. On Friday, the landfill sent its first batch of treated leachate to the wastewater treatment plant. Initial tests indicate a dramatic drop in the level of PFCs.

The actions of DU and the landfill help preserve the river, both for humans and animals.

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